

## DEGREES

"A poem requires metrical form  
for permanence," she said.

I said that in most current usage  
the simile, end-rhyme and metrically exact verse,  
were hackneyed, if not archaic.

She harrumphed,  
"you will be laughed out of academia."

I told her I had ditched academics  
when I dropped out of high school;  
then quoted Henry Miller:  
"everything taught is a lie."

She started loudly,  
"you'd better be careful  
not to make the mistake  
self-educated writers make,  
with their eccentric literary theories.  
Even the neo-formalists aren't formal enough,  
they don't know an anapest from Budapest."

She was annoying me  
and knew it, so continued,  
"you need to go back to school  
and get a Master's  
or you will never be taken seriously  
no matter how good your poems are.  
Why do you think I got mine?  
Besides, I can teach."

I smiled. She went on,  
"and poetry must never be used  
to attack people —  
that's hatefulness, not art."

Her poems were never  
as lively as her tirades —  
now I knew why.

— Joseph Hargraves

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